

25 Feb 1970

Harold:

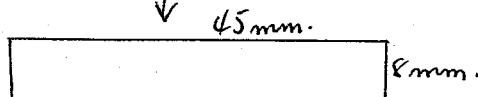
I have much good mail from you, and again may have to answer it piecemeal. This letter concerns what I mentioned before about the possibility of JFK being head-shot after death in order to produce ~~xxmxxmxxmxx~~ an entrance hole where one was badly needed. ~~xxxxxx~~ Since you add nothing substantive to what you have already said, I am going to put that notion aside-- at least not bother with it unless something is learned to support it. My writing only to you about this is an indication of how "far out" I myself think it is, and with what little enthusiasm I want to push it. Nevertheless, let me tell you what caused me to entertain the idea, so that if you should bump into something that substantiates it, you will not dismiss indications as inherently unreliable.

The notion popped into my head not from instinctive suspicion of those who handled the body, but from a substantive and prominent contradiction in the way observers describe the minute "dust-like" particles in JFK's head.

Humes and Kellerman saw at least one head X-ray that showed the "dust" in JFK's brain. Both describe 30 or 40 such particles (keep in mind that in fact there were probably many more which were not represented on the X-ray, since some are hidden behind others). What is important here is that both H and K say that the particles were distributed throughout the brain. I am aware that that description is limited in its value, for it is not specific regarding the precise distribution of the fragments, but I consider it significant that they ~~xxxx~~ reported a rather dispersed distribution of the fragments. Before the Panel Report was issued, I had guessed that JFK had been hit from the front by a varmint ~~ang~~ bullet and predicted (I can't remember to whom) that the X-rays would show that the "dust" was concentrated in the front part of the head, that the ~~xxx~~ great majority of particles would occur in the front area.

I was gratified, then, and not the least surprised, when the Panel reported that indeed the fragments were concentrated in the front part of the brain, just as I had thought they would be. The bedazzled elation that I felt over correctly guessing the situation caused me to overlook an important feature ~~xxxx~~ of the Panel's description that seriously contradicts what H and K said about the distribution of the "dust". I did indeed note the contradiction, but in my mind I tended to explain it away on the ground that ~~xx~~ H and K had erroneously described too diverse a distribution of ~~xxx~~ "dust", and that the Panel had erroneously described too concentrated a distribution.

You will recall that the Panel says that the "dust" is concentrated in an area "45 mm long and 8mm wide" (p.11). This is a far smaller area than I had anticipated. I wondered what could be the cause of the Panel's making such an error, but I did not suppose that it was anything but an error.



In fact, the Panel (p.11) describes two groups of fragments, one group of "relatively large fragments, more or less randomly distributed", and the concentration of "dust" that I just described. So maybe H and K were referring only to the group of "relatively large fragments", and inadvertently ignoring the concentration of "dust".

Now let's dismiss the randomly distributed group as being the ~~xxxxxx~~ remnants of a varminter that disintegrated in the head. And also take the Panel's description of the distribution of "dust" as being accurate. If that description is accurate, I can make no sense out of it except by supposing that a pistol was put to the back of JFK's ~~head~~ right in contact with it, and fired. If that was the case, then the "dust" represented on the X-rays is not lead, not metallic; it is flakes of gunpowder. Let me explain.

If you fire a gun in the dark, especially a handgun since it has a short barrel, you will note a great flash of light emanating from the muzzle (also from the sides, in front of the cylinder, if the gun is a revolver, not a pistol). What you see as a flash of light is burning gunpowder that follows the bullet out of the barrel. It's especially evident in handguns because the barrel is short and not all of the powder burns off in the barrel.

Now, in cases of shooting where the gun is held directly against the body of the victim, the unburned powder that follows the bullet out of the barrel is carried into the body of the victim. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXPENETRATEXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXPENETRATE~~. What's intriguing is the way in which the powder penetrates, for it corresponds to what is evident in the "dust" concentration in JFK's head. The gunpowder has very little mass, with insufficient force even to penetrate skin except for a very slight distance. However, when following a bullet into a body, gunpowder can penetrate to a few inches distance. The reason is that it progresses along the open channel that the bullet produces in its wake; the powder is right behind the bullet and distributes itself along the walls of the ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ channel that the bullet cuts.

I have no personal experience with this sort of thing, but I know a good deal from books that I have read, and I know that what I have said above is true-- about how the powder behaves when it follows a bullet into a body.

The only apparent anomaly as this applies to JFK is that the Panel says that the concentration of dust does not extend back as far as the hole in the back of the head. I would expect that if the "dust" were gunpowder, it would be evident all along the track. But that is purely a guess, and it may be that powder does not deposit itself near the contact wound. Except for that ~~xxxxxx~~ apparent anomaly (which may not, after all, be abnormal) the ~~xxxxx~~ Panel description of the "dust" exactly fits what I have in mind.

*34th*

If a contact wound ~~xxxx~~ had been administered to JFK's head as I described, there would be other indications of it, although not conclusive in themselves. The contact wound of entrance would be ragged (how ragged would depend on the cartridge used), and the outline of the muzzle of the gun might be evident on the surface with which it was in contact when the gun was fired (this, however, could be covered up if a piece of paper or something of that sort were laid over the flesh before the bullet was fired into the body).

That's about it. I think it makes a pretty good case, but I would not push it at all hard unless there were more to substantiate it. Without it, however, I know of no other way to explain the odd concentration of "dust" that the Panel describes-- I would be forced to assume that the Panel's description is somehow wrong, which indeed is what I did before this other notion grabbed me.

It's possible, but not yet decided, that I may send this and my previous letter on this matter to Gary. Since he is attached to a hospital, he may have an opportunity to see some X-rays taken of people who have suffered contact wounds, and possibly confirm or vitiate my analysis. I'll let you know if I send it to him.

More mail will follow when I get a chance.

Still,

*Dick*

P.S. Enclosed are the stamps that you sent to me for cigar mailings. Too bad I can't send you more. If you change your mind, let me know, although I do not encourage it, for you must look out for your health.